Carroll College Exit Polls
INTRODUCTION AND USER GUIDE, 2018

Since the fall of 2014, students in a Carroll College class on Elections have been running exit polls on Election Day. We covered the "midterm" elections in November 2014, the general elections in November 2016, the May 2017 special election to fill Montana's lone seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, and the November 2018 General Election.

We use single-page surveys with the questions designed by Carroll students and Dr. Street, who teaches in the Political Science department. We cover polling places across Lewis and Clark County, with the locations sampled at random (but with the likelihood of appearing in the sample designed to be proportional to the share of the county's electorate that is registered to vote at each polling place). In 2018 we also ran the exit poll at the MetraPark polling place in Billings and the Expo Park polling place in Great Falls. In order to avoid revealing information that might allow individual survey participants to be identified we do not provide information on the various polling places in Lewis and Clark County.

In some years we have used more than one version of the survey, with some separate questions on each, in order to cover a wider range of topics. These are shuffled in order to randomize which survey participants receive which version of the survey.

The survey does not cover the people who opt to vote by mail.

Students ask people to participate as the voters leave the polling place. Those who opt to take part take a clipboard so that they can fill out the survey in private if they like. Starting in 2018 we also allowed some people to answer using iPads. Students are trained to approach the very next person who exits the polling place, once the clipboard/iPad is available again, so as to avoid showing any preference for polling certain kinds of voter. We have been delighted that so many people are willing to participate—an average of about 800 each year!

Students then write research papers based on the data collected, allowing them to test out their ideas about why people vote the way they do, and also to apply the statistical tools that they have learned in class to understand real-world data.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Dr. Alex Street, astreet@carroll.edu